

The Avon Extension

The way forward



Forging ahead with the vital link

The exciting move to combine the forces of two waterway organisations will unlock the massive potential of one of the most important waterway restoration projects of this century. Together, Avon Navigation Trust and the Stratford & Warwick Waterways Trust will make history again.

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Setting the scene



*The Avon wends its way
through Warwick Castle Park.*

The Avon Extension will make a big splash across the waterways world, mirroring the impact when Charles Douglas Barwell OBE and David Hutchings MBE restored most of the Avon half a century ago.

Now the combined strengths of the Avon Navigation Trust (ANT), which was born out of those ground-breaking projects, and the crucial work of Stratford & Warwick Waterways Trust (SWWT) will power the way to success.

The Avon Extension will create a tourist-attracting connection for wide beam boats from the Severn through Stratford and Warwick onto the Thames via the Grand Union Canal.

It will open up the remote upper reaches of

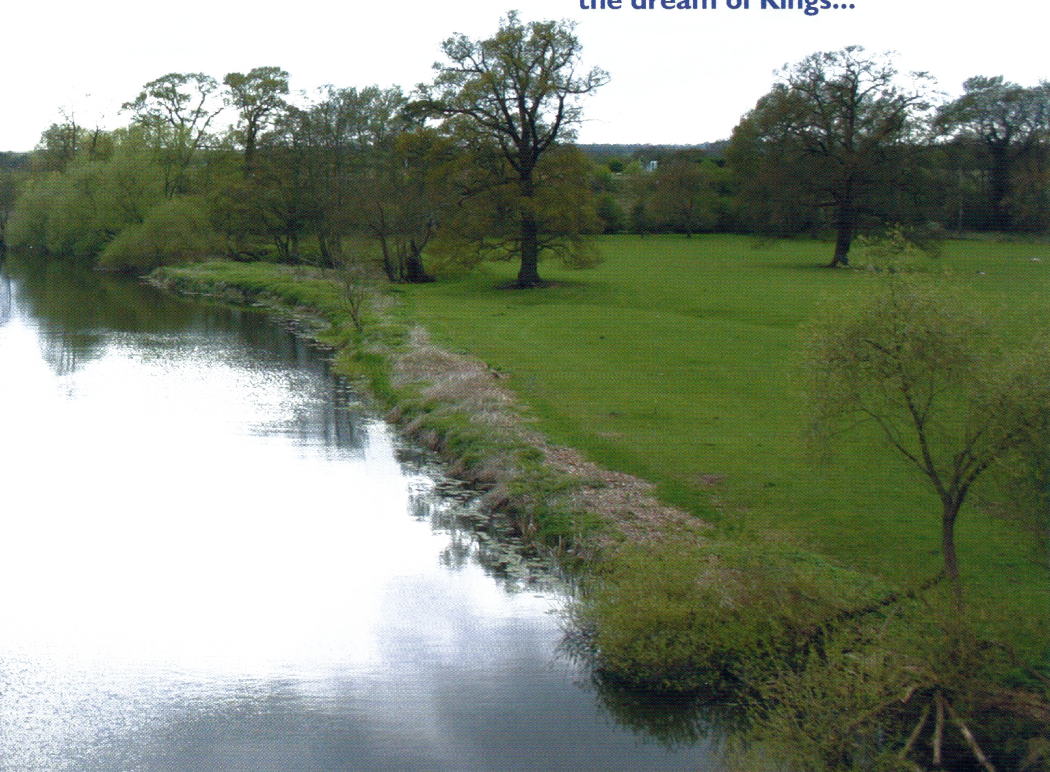
the Avon, which are breathtakingly beautiful but currently mostly unseen.

Visitors will be able to go forth enjoying the splendours of the Avon at Tewkesbury through Evesham to Stratford-upon-Avon, and thence cruise through stunning countryside, past the National Trust's Charlecote Park and the wonders of castle-topped Warwick.

The Avon Extension alone will attract visitors onto the new glittering jewel of the Midlands, but there could be far more to come.

The potential is there to create an economy-boosting linear water park, with opportunities for businesses, new and old, along the sparkling stretches.

**And it was once, at least in part,
the dream of Kings...**





The journey



The journey began with a procession of Kings who were eager to encourage the trading potential of the rivers. In 1635, the Avon navigation was planned and authorised by King Charles I.

The intention then was to get as near as possible to Coventry, but the work petered out near Warwick and was eventually lost in the mists of time and the challenges of the English Civil War.

Wind on over 300 years and, prompted by a family boat trip blocked by the choked Avon, Engineer Charles Douglas Barwell OBE bought the Navigation Rights and led the Lower Avon Navigation Trust (LANT) to restore the river from Tewkesbury to Evesham.

Architect David Hutchings MBE spearheaded the drive to reopen the Southern Stratford Canal with the National Trust and restored the river from Evesham to Stratford as Manager of the Upper Avon Navigation Trust (UANT).

In 2014, ANT, SWWT, the Canal & River Trust



The crowds watch as the Queen Mother is taken through a lock while on her 1964 canal trip. Photo by courtesy of The Stratford on Avon Canal Society.



Nick Barwell unveils a plaque to his pioneering father's work. Photograph by Peter Wilkinson.

(CRT) and The Inland Waterways Association (IWA) marked the anniversary of the official openings and the pioneers' success. That success was achieved with the help of countless volunteers and many local bodies.

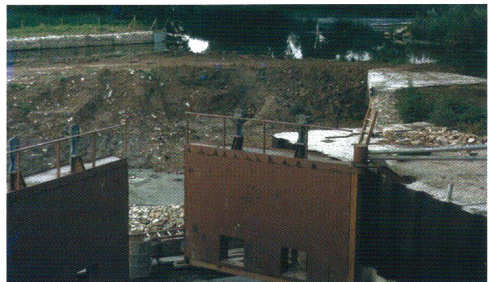
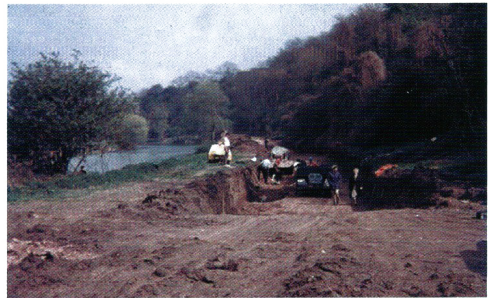
They recreated the 1964 and 1974 celebratory Royal boat trips by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, with the Avon champions' sons as modern-day VIP guests.

The Avon Extension dream was nearer...



Job Hutchings, son of David Hutchings MBE, at the 2014 anniversary celebration. Photograph by Peter Wilkinson.

Building nine Locks on the Avon formed part of the original restoration.



The Avon Extension



ANT's work is applauded by river users. Some of 2015's highlights included moving quickly to rescue and rebuild the flood-ravaged Pershore lock island (above. Photo: Michael Hodges); new moorings at Twynning (below left) and volunteers spruced up Stratford's Trinity lock (below right).



The major players

When David Hutchings MBE completed the Evesham to Stratford stretch for UANT, the intention was always to press on upriver.

But times and the challenges of legislation have changed a great deal since the early years of restoration.

Local experts, organisations and waterways enthusiasts remained passionate about restoring the missing link, despite the technical challenges that lay ahead.

Then came SWWT, which was launched 10 years ago to focus wholly on the project.

This campaigning organisation raised awareness and gathered valuable support and funds to provide the first major milestone - the Feasibility Study - with the support of

IWA and ANT.

Meanwhile, UANT and LANT combined to become ANT in 2010. It rapidly evolved to become the well-respected, and innovative navigation authority it is today, with a strong brand, fine staff and equipment, and expert resources.

ANT has its objectives of 'Administer, Maintain and Improve the River Avon' completely covered and is in perfect shape to embrace Restoration again.

SWWT has produced the vital blueprint for the future.

Bringing the two mighty forces together will turn a long-cherished dream into

a real-life triumph....

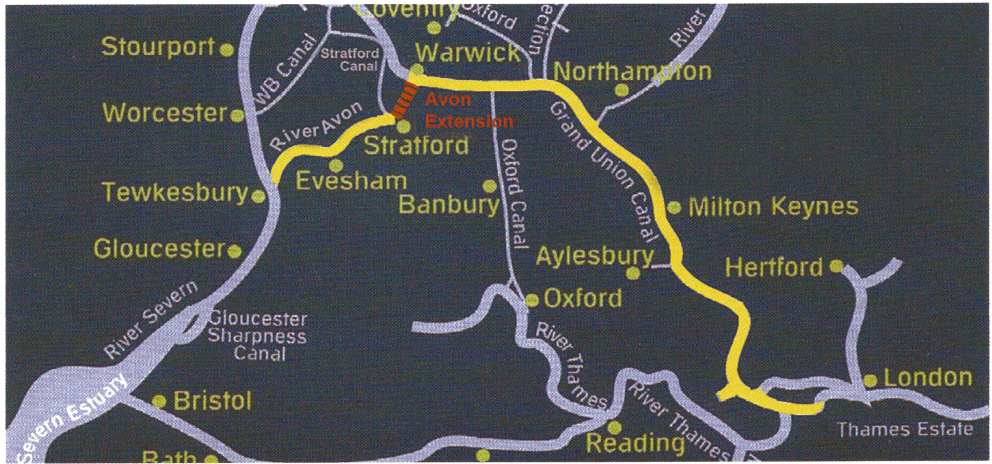
The way forward

- Merging SWWT and ANT brings valuable talent and expertise together;
- SWWT current membership and directors join ANT to boost the cause;
- By officially readopting Restore as one of its leading objectives, ANT will be ready and eager to steer towards the Avon Extension goal;
- The ANT Avon Extension team, led by General Manager Clive Matthews, has the physical resources, expertise and the fund-raising experience to get there;
- SWWT's funds are channelled straight into the Avon Extension project, backed by ANT's organisation;
- The ANT task force team will work closely with both organisations' joint membership to harness the expert skills and attract funding and volunteers;
- The team will work closely with The Inland Waterways Association, Canal & River Trust, Environment Agency, Local Enterprise Partnerships, National Trust, Landowners, Local Authorities and other bodies to ensure a joint approach.



Together we look forward to the next big celebration
- the grand opening of the Avon Extension.

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It is just 12 miles, but the Avon Extension will be a super highway to success for the local environment, the economy and the UK.

The stretch, identified by the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities as one of the few missing broad inland navigation links, will be hugely welcomed by boaters who will be able to expand their Avon and Severn experience to the new horizon of the Thames.

There are also many other potential benefits, including opportunities to:

- Create a linear water park that opens up

more river access to everyone, including walkers, cyclists and small boats.

- Attract many more visitors to the area, in addition to providing a superb amenity for local people to enjoy.
- Attract new businesses, together with boosting opportunities for existing entrepreneurs to seize the initiative.
- Create substantial new and enhanced wetland and wildlife areas.
- Promote the Avon Valley as a jewel in the crown of UK tourism.

The Avon Extension is a hugely important, high profile project for the region and for the UK and it is even more special for ANT, SWWT and everyone who enjoys and loves our rivers and canals.

This initiative will be a joyous clarion call for volunteers from far and wide to help breathe new life into our waterways and make history... just like those legions of people who made such a big difference by helping Charles Douglas Barwell OBE and David Hutchings MBE all those years ago.

For more information, and to register your interest and support, contact the Avon Navigation Trust: Mill Wharf, Mill Lane, Wyre Piddle, Nr Pershore, Worcestershire WR10 2JF.

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